

**Testimony of Bayan Abunar  
UConn School of Medicine Student**

**Appropriations Committee – Budget Hearing for UConn Health  
February 15, 2017**

**Testimony Provided for HB7027**

Good evening,

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to be here and to speak with you today. My name is Bayan Abunar and I am a second year medical student at the University Of Connecticut School Of Medicine.

I would like to start by thank you for your time and support for the University of Connecticut and UConn Health. It is through the state funds to UConn Health and your regular investments to our School of Medicine and Dental Medicine that have made it an affordable and accessible place for students of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds, including myself, to learn to be compassionate health care providers.

I would like to briefly speak with you today about my journey and how the University, along with its external programs, is the reason I am standing in front of you as a prospective physician. I grew up here, I am a product of the CT public school system, I went to Central High school in Bridgeport CT, I graduated from Fairfield University and UConn's programs have impacted my life all along; especially the CT Area Health Education Center program (AHEC).

AHEC is a program based at UConn Health that works throughout Connecticut to improve access to basic health care. Among other things, AHEC has programs to recruit under-represented kids into health professions and to address health disparities. AHEC's Youth Health Service Program provided me with the necessary skills to assist me in graduating high school and prepare me to attend college. At Fairfield University, AHEC's Collegiate Health Service Corps provided me with opportunities to work with underserved populations and learn about health care and health disparity. That experience showed me first-hand that we need a more diverse group of health professionals working to improve patient outcomes.

It was with AHEC's support that I was able to gain the confidence to pursue medicine. After graduating from Fairfield University, I decided to join AmeriCorps for a year of service, working with AHEC specifically to pay it forward to the same programs that helped build me up.

One of the biggest reasons I chose to attend UConn is because of AHEC's graduate Urban Service Track Program. It was a natural continuation of the efforts I was taking up until this point. Their mission has helped to create the opportunities for countless others like myself to be able to pursue medicine. We, alongside students in Dental Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Social Work and Quinnipiac's Physician Assistant schools strive to work as interprofessional collaborative teams to bring patient centered care to vulnerable and underserved citizens in the

state. Furthermore, in my year and a half as a student here, I am proud of being a part of a family working to make ALL health care professionals more culturally competent.

UConn Health is at the cutting edge of medicine. I have had the pleasure to work with patients at the new outpatient pavilion and hospital tower who are very grateful for the care they have received. I am excited to be a part of the future of UConn Health, where compassionate providers work in concert to serve our communities. But without the support from the state and legislators like yourselves, I am afraid it will be a far cry from the potential impact we can provide.

The challenges you face in reducing the state budget are daunting and I do not envy the task; however, reducing funding for UConn Health and programs like AHEC will jeopardize the progress we have made in Connecticut to address health disparities and to maintain the affordability and access to the UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine. This school has impacted my life and career with their mission to providing physicians who are compassionate, diverse and culturally competent. Making this kind of impact is what encourages me to stay in CT and to "give back" to the citizens, especially those from underserved communities.

Again thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening and for your ongoing support of the University of Connecticut, UConn Health and the CT AHEC Program. I urge you to continue to invest in these entities by restoring funding to the FY16-17 level which provide tremendous benefit for the students, patients and Connecticut's economy.